

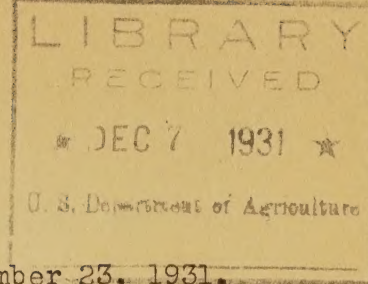
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RECOMMENDATIONS OF LAND UTILIZATION CONFERENCE

The following recommendations, submitted to the 350 or more registered delegates attending the Land Utilization Conference called by Secretary of Agriculture Arthur M. Hyde and the Association of Land Grant Colleges and Universities at Chicago, November 19 to 21, were approved as the majority sentiment of the conference. A viva voce vote was called for after the reading of each recommendation. The personnel of the committee which drew up the recommendations appears at the end of this report.

The committee report, as amended and approved, follows in full:

PREAMBLE

Our Federal and State land policies have, in the main, encouraged the rapid transfer of public lands to private ownership with little regard given to the uses to which the land was best adapted or to the demand for its products. The economic and social difficulties in Agriculture which are so widely recognized at present, are in considerable degree traceable to the affects of these policies. It, therefore becomes imperative for all groups connected with land use to cooperate in formulating new policies which shall be actively addressed, through adequate and unified organization and coordination to the intelligent use of all publicly and privately owned land and whether or not it be submarginal or supermarginal. The central purposes of these policies should be to develop and conserve our land resources in such manner as to provide adequately for our present and future needs. Any adequate land policy must provide for the preservation of soil fertility, must aid toward adjustment of production to demand, must provide for economic use of marginal lands, and in other ways must make for the security of agriculture.

1890-1891

1890-1891

REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE

FOR THE YEAR 1890-1891

The following statement shows the results of the work of the General Land Office during the year 1890-1891. It is divided into two parts, the first of which contains a summary of the work of the office, and the second a detailed statement of the work of the various divisions. The first part is divided into three sections, the first of which contains a summary of the work of the office, and the second a detailed statement of the work of the various divisions. The second part is divided into two sections, the first of which contains a summary of the work of the office, and the second a detailed statement of the work of the various divisions.

The following were among the many topics considered by the Committee and furnished much of the basis for its recommendations: An inventory of land resources as a basis of land use; the indication of crop areas and their limits; indication of range economic returns by soil regions; intensification of production; acquisition of land by the public; management of public lands; population; taxation; reclamation; and rural credits.

Looking definitely to the establishment of a rational land use policy the Committee offers the following recommendations:

Recommendation No.1: Administration of public domain. It is recommended that in order to obtain conservation and rehabilitation of the grazing ranges of the public domain that these lands be organized into public ranges to be administered by a Federal agency in a manner similar to and in coordination with the national forests. Such public ranges should include lands withdrawn for minerals or for other purposes when the use of such lands for grazing is not inconsistent with the purposes of withdrawal.

Recommendation No.2. Watershed Protection. It is recognized that throughout the Rocky Mountain Regions and the Pacific Coastal Region hundreds of communities are directly dependent on nearby watersheds for their supply of water for irrigation and other purposes and in many cases this dependency interstate in scope due to the watersheds being in one State and the irrigation use in another State, and also due to the fact that the irrigation water of one State must often be stored in another State. Inasmuch as these facts can not be changed due to the geography of the region it is recommended that lands valuable for watershed protection should be administered under the supervision of the Federal Government.

Recommendation No. 3: Protection of School Lands. In the Western States, lands granted to the States for school purposes, usually included either two or four sections in each township distributed over the major part of the State's area. Inasmuch as proper administration of land thus scattered has been impracticable, it is recommended that for the protection of the State in the interest of the school lands that remain that efforts be made to have laws enacted which will permit the exchange of the present school lands for others equal in value, and that school land be collected in blocks of such sized units as to be economical grazing areas, thereby protecting the school lands for the continued benefit of the public schools.

Recommendation No. 4: Agricultural Credit. It is recommended that the Secretary of Agriculture call into conference representatives of various credit agencies engaged in making loans to farmers. This meeting should include representatives of Federal Land Banks, Joint Stock Land Banks, Federal Intermediate Credit Banks, State and National Banks, and other financial institutions having a substantial volume of loans advanced to agriculture. The purpose of this conference should be to formulate a definite and coordinate program which credit agencies may adopt to assist in bringing about immediate readjustment in land utilization and farm organization.

Recommendation No. 5: Outlook Work. It is imperative that the program of outlook work of the United States Department of Agriculture and the State Colleges be continued and expanded in order to provide a sound economic basis for planning the use of land for agricultural purposes, for determining the changes and adjustments of land use that will be required as economic conditions change and for determining desirable readjustments in areas devoted to agriculture as a vital part of the outlook program, we recommend the preparation and publication at frequent intervals of national and local outlook reports containing unequivocal and understandable statements representing the best judgment of national, State, and local outlook workers concerning the trend of supply and demand for the different agricultural commodities in the different parts of the country in the years ahead.

Recommendation No. 6: The Economic Inventory of Land Resources and Classification of Soils. The economic use of agricultural land is directly affected by topography, climate, texture and chemical properties, biological defects and location. These major factors usually determine the value of the land for production and taxation purposes. It is recommended therefore that a national inventory be made of our land resources, that soils be classified on the basis of their agricultural value, and that our land taxation system and practices be readjusted accordingly. Sufficient information as to particular soil types is now available to permit prompt and effective initial action.

Recommendation No. 7: Homestead Interest. It is recommended that the several Homestead Acts be administered in the future with more careful supervision of land available for home making; that the lands opened for homestead entry be carefully classified at an early date and only those which after economic study promise a satisfactory standard of living be made available for entry. Lands classed as marginal or submarginal should be withdrawn from homestead entry and definitely added to the public range.

Recommendation No. 8: Taxation. In view of the necessity of a more equitable distribution of the tax burden, we recommend the following: First, the States take effective steps to revise their systems of taxation to the end that every person having ability to pay taxes would be required to contribute directly to the support of State and local governments through an income tax; second, that total expenditures should be held in check and reduced wherever possible without serious injury to essential service through consolidation of counties and other units of local government in order to prevent the new revenues from becoming merely an additional total expenditure; third, that greater coordination should be brought about between the Federal government and the State in taxation to the end that each will rely primarily on those taxes that are relatively best suited to it from the standpoint of economic facts and administrative feasibility.

Recommendation No. 9: Land Development. It is recommended that land development enterprises be licensed and regulated.

Recommendation No. 10. Regional Competition: Since no determination of the best use of any type of land can safely be made without careful consideration of economic and technical feasibility of the various proposed uses and the profits likely to be derived from it, and since use for farming is in question on much so-called marginal and sub-marginal lands, and changes in types of farming are called for on much of the better agricultural land we recommend that increased attention be given to a study of all the factors affecting the feasibility of land for agricultural use and the type of agricultural use best suited to each specific kind of land. These factors include foreign and domestic competition in the production of all agricultural commodities and the development of methods of farming and types of equipment and their adaptability under various conditions, the feasibility of various forms of the organization of farms for production, and the various methods of operation as well as the outlook for the prices of various agricultural commodities.

Recommendation No. 11. Reclamation. It is recommended that the Reclamation Service confine its efforts to finishing projects already started and to rehabilitating deficient water rights on lands now cultivated and occupied, but that new lands or new classification projects neither be undertaken through irrigation or drainage until they are justified by the agricultural needs of the Nation.

Recommendation No. 12. Use of Marginal Land. This conference has devoted careful consideration to a group of problems with which our country has never adequately coped, namely, the extensive area of land which is in use or tends to be used for purposes to which it is not physically and economically adapted or that is virtually not used at all. These lands include:

1. Occupied farm lands which because of technological or other changes in their competitive position are no longer capable of yielding a reasonable return to farmers.

2. Range and other lands that tend to come in or go out of farming under the stimulus of variations in the price or rainfall cycles.

3. Extensive areas of cutover lands that are virtually idle.

4. A large acreage of other land in addition to the above, that tends to be pushed into use for farming when economic conditions do not justify such use.

5. The lack of a program for such lands consistent with the public interest has resulted in consequences such as numerous farm families struggling against hopeless obstacles, which we should no longer tolerate, an increasing number of abandoned farms, a rapidly growing area of tax-delinquent land which is being re-sold for the same uses under which it becomes tax-delinquent, the wastage of soil resources through erosion or fire, the serious dislocation of the fiscal and institutional arrangements of units of local government through the disappearance of land from the tax rolls, a sparse and scattering population that can be supplied with adequate schools and roads only at great expense.

(See insert on next page)

Recommendation No. 13: Public Retention or Acquisition of Land.

After every effort has been made to promote a sound type of private utilization there will remain extensive areas that are not adapted for private utilization or that for one reason or another should be under public ownership and management in order to prevent their misuse or other reasons. With the exception of small areas acquired for special requirements Federal land acquisition through purchase at present is confined to the following main purposes:

Insert - Recommendation No. 12 - Continued.

This conference urges and emphatically recommends that Federal and State agencies develop a coordinate program of land utilization for these extensive areas of idle or misused lands. We believe it to be a sound policy that before we undertake to retain original land for public ownership, every reasonable effort should be made to remove the conditions that discourage present forms of private utilization, not inconsistent with public welfare; plans for modifying such conditions should be an important part of a program for dealing with these areas. Among these conditions are the following: First, a good deal of farm or forest lands can not be utilized profitably by private individuals because of an imposed tax burden. Certainly, States and counties should not force themselves to take over such lands if a modification in tax burden would avoid this necessity. A forest tax law will frequently aid private owners to utilize lands for forests along sound lines. Second, in some forest, farming, or range and cut-over areas, the consolidation of scattered tracts into units of economic operation will facilitate profitable private utilization. Private forest utilization can be maintained in many cases by better provision of fire protection; the supply of planting stock, and for small holdings by such measures as cooperative management, cutting, hauling, and marketing.

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1. Forest lands for the protection of the head waters of navigable streams;

2. For growing timber (at present limited by appropriation and tacit understanding to the establishment of small areas of demonstration forests/^{mainly} in the South. The total program for this and the first-mentioned purpose is only about 15,000,000 acres).

3. Bird and game refuges under the administration of the Biological Survey.

4. National Parks and monuments (except for the reservation of land from the public domain, these are being developed partly on lands contributed by non-federal agencies).

State land acquisition is confined mainly to the establishment of State parts and/or State forests; but the scope of this activity is not very considerable outside of New York, Pennsylvania, and the Lake States.

There appear to be a number of important objectives in public acquisition, in addition to those mentioned, some mainly of local interest and others of broader application, as follows:

1. To withdraw from private ownership tracts occupied by sparse and scattered population, in order to economize State and local expenditures for public service.

2. To provide for the permanent maintenance of local forests on which communities are dependent or may become dependent for part-time employment, markets, supplies of raw material for local industries, fuel, posts, and other supplies for farmers and other residents of the community, local refuges for game and other local centers of recreation.

3. To remove from private ownership lands that are periodically brought into temporary cultivation under the stimulus of high prices or favorable yields, but are incapable of permanently profitable utilization, in order

to remove the unfair competition of such lands to the established farming industry, and to prevent the serious wastes, and hardships incurred by their occupants after the temporary favorable conditions have passed.

4. To remove from private ownership lands that can not be utilized profitably by private individuals or concerns without serious wastage of the soil through erosion or other causes.

The objectives already adopted, and this has reference to this preceding resolution, should also be materially amplified. The policy of water-shed protection both on the public domain and other areas should be carried much further, and a provision for re-forestation appears inadequate to forestall an ultimate shortage of timber.

The immediate task is to deal constructively with the areas that are becoming tax delinquent. There is very great variation at present in the policies followed in various States with regard to such lands. Only in a few States is existing policy in line with the requirements of a broad national land policy. Since the interests of the State and Federal governments interpenetrate in the whole field of land acquisition, the Federal government should take the lead in bringing about a definition and coordination of objectives with the States. Plans should contemplate a unification of policies for the disposition of tax-delinquent lands, as well as for other methods of acquisition.



We also recommend prompt coordinate Federal and State action in defining the principles, scope, and methods of public land acquisition and administration, and in determining what lands should soon or ultimately be acquired and by what agencies.

Recommendation No. 14: Soil Conservation. Steps should be taken to outline and initiate a program of soil conservation whereby damage from erosion, leaching, increasing acidity, destruction of organic matter, deterioration of soil structure, over-grazing, flooding and alkali accumulation may be reduced to a minimum.

Recommendation No. 15: Land Classification. An essential basis of economic investigation in land utilization is adequate physical data in the form of soil surveys, topographic surveys, weather records, etc. Some of the regions of the country where land use problems are most acute are most inadequately covered by such surveys. There is obvious need for coordinating this survey work with the land utilization surveys aimed at the development of a program of land utilization. This economic investigational work must obtain basic information with regard to the numerous economic and social conditions that must be taken into consideration in the formulation of a land utilization program for a given area, such as the economic use for which the land is best adapted, tax burdens, local fiscal set-up of the area, and the relation of proposed changes in the use and ownership of land to fiscal and insitutional arrangement. This type of research work should be carried out by the Federal and State agencies cooperating and would have to be much more adequately provided for. It is possible that in order to take care of the problem in States unable to make adequate financial contributions, some extension of the Pur-nell Act will be found necessary. The extent of the problems of idle lands and of the probable needs for public acquisition does not vary with the financial capacity of the various local and State governments to cope with them. Some of the States

where these problems are most extensive are most lacking in financial resources. We should not permit a narrow theory of States' rights and obligations, under our system of dual sovereignty, to prevent an adequate provision for dealing with these problems wherever they occur.

We note with gratification the steps already taken by the State of New York in developing a program of land classification and acquisition.

Recommendation No. 16: Decentralization of Industry and its Effect Upon Land Utilization. We recommend that a study be made of possible decentralization of industry and population from the point of view of land utilization.

Recommendation No. 17: Regional Conferences. In view of the influences of topography, climate, soil types, etc., on land utilization, and the need for enlisting regional and even local leadership in dealing with the many and varied phases of the subject, the Committee recommends that the Secretary of Agriculture, in conjunction with the Land Grant Colleges and other agricultural agencies, call regional land utilization conferences throughout the country at such places and at such times as may best serve the purpose of cooperating with the committees proposed by this conference in initiating and consummating a sound and constructive national land use policy.

Recommendation No. 18: Creation of Committees. It is an accepted fact that the value and effectiveness of any plan depends upon the vigor and intelligence with which it is applied. To apply any plan effectively there must be adequate machinery. To that end we recommend the creation of two committees, one to be known as the National Land Use Planning Committee, and the other to be known as the National Advisory and Legislative Committee on Land Use.

It is recommended that these committees be constituted and called together for organization as follows:

The National Land Use Planning Committee: It is recommended that five repre-

There is probably more hope of success in slamming shut a few doors through which expansion is flowing than there is in the recapture of acreage. Most of the expansion takes place in four directions:--drainage, irrigation, clearing of forests, and dry land farming. The extent of that expansion is not generally recognized. There are both dynamite and enlightenment in the statistic, taken from the Census, that there were 84,000 fewer farms in 1930 than in 1925, but there were 15 million more acres in crops. This in five years, and the last five years at that! There are both pathos and problems in the fact that the 366 million acres planted in crops in 1930 was 55 million acres more than our cultivated area in 1909, and larger than the war time peak of 1919.

We must start sometime. No program which we can conceive will immediately cure the present emergency. A long-time land use program can not write an immediate answer to the present emergency, but the present emergency emphasizes the immediate need for a long time program. If we had begun even so short a time as twenty years ago,--before the expansion of our cultivated area by fifty five million acres,--how much of tragedy and distress might have been prevented. If we could have prevented the entry of the submarginal portion of those 55 million acres, or could have held in abeyance such portion as was not economically needed what a different story we could write for American agriculture?

The proper size of our agricultural plant can not be definitely fixed. Conditions change and national demands upon agriculture change with them. Nevertheless, one great benefit from a proper land policy would be the approximation of the size of our land plant in the light of economic condition. We ask the farmer to adjust his acreage. His is a difficult job, if forces beyond his control and heedless of his interests, are constantly enlarging the total acreage to which he must adjust his own.

Sheep and Wool Growers Association - one member; American National Live Stock Association - one member; American Railway Development Association - one member.

The personnel of the committee which submitted the above recommendations was as follows:

Cully A. Cobb, associate editor, The Progressive Farmer; Dr. William Peterson, director of extension, Utah Agricultural College; J. G. Lipman, dean and director, New Jersey Agricultural College; R. W. Reynolds, agricultural and industrial agent, Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railway; Charles E. Hearst, vice-president, American Farm Bureau Federation; George D. Pratt, president, American Forestry Association; H. R. Tolley, director, Gianinni Foundation, University of California; Fred Brenckman, Washington representative, National Grange; Thomas P. Cooper, dean and director, Kentucky Agricultural College; C. O. Moser, president, National Cooperative Council; Elbert S. Brigham, National Insurance Company of Vermont; E. H. Thompson, president, Federal Land Bank, Springfield, Massachusetts; Sherman M. Woodward, Iowa City, Iowa, representing American Society of Civil Engineers; Dan H. Otis, American Bankers' Association; John B. Bennett, United States Chamber of Commerce; M. L. Wilson, chairman, Department of Economics, Montana Agricultural College; W. C. Coffey, dean and director, Minnesota Agricultural College; C. E. Ladd, director of extension, Cornell University; W. W. Atwood, president, Clark University and president, National Park Association; L. J. Fletcher, president, American Society of Agricultural Engineers; William A. Schoenfeld, dean and director, Oregon State Agricultural College, Corvallis, Oregon.

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